

DISPENSARIES,

AND

Dispensary Physicians

VINDICATED, &c.

THE restless endeavours of some Self interested designing Men to overthrow the *Dispensaries*, and to disgrace both in Publick, and Private, the particular Members of 'em, have extorted this short, but necessary Account of the Rise and Prosecution of that design; that the World may have at once a distinct tho' contracted View of the Justice and Publick Use of it, and of the Disfingenuity, Malice, and foul Practices of its Enemies.

The helpless Condition of the Sick Poor First produc'd this unanimous Vote, at a general Meeting of the College of Physicians: That all their Members should give their Advice gratis to their Sick Neighbouring Poor, when desir'd, within the City of London or Seven Miles round. This Vote was communicated to the Lord Mayor, and Court of Aldermen, by whom a Committee was appointed to assist towards the making this Design as generally useful and practicable, as they cou'd.

The concurrence of the Apothecaries was thought absolutely necessary to compleat this Charity, that the Physician's kindness might not be render'd ineffectual by the insupportable Charge of the Medicines. But the Apothecaries peremptorily refusing to submit to any limitation of Gain, tho' of their own appointment, and in the case of the Poor only, the intended Charity was for that time defeated.

Hereupon a Proposal was made by the City Committee that the College should furnish the Medicines for the Poor, and perfect alone that Charity which the Apothecaries refus'd to concur in. This Proposal gave Birth to the *Dispensaries*, which were rais'd upon the voluntary Contributions of divers Charitably disposed Members of the College towards a Joint Stock, for the preparing and delivering Medicines to the Poor at Rates near the Intrinsic Value.

The Apothecaries therefore have no reason to complain, and calumniate the Physicians of the *Dispensaries*, as if they had erected these Offices only to ruine their Trade and Business. For the Physicians (whatever provocations they had to the contrary) were sufficiently tender of the Apothecaries suppos'd Property, when they offer'd the management of their Charity to 'em upon any reasonable Terms, which themselves shou'd appoint, provided they were but ascertain'd. They were willing to reconcile 'em to a charitable design by allowing 'em some Profit, and might with justice expect, that it shou'd be moderate, which was to be made out of the Calamities and distress of the meanest and most necessitous of the People, and out of Prescriptions for which the Prescribers themselves were contented to take nothing. If their Refusal has drawn after it any ill Consequences, then unforeseen to 'em, they may have just reason to condemn and repent their obstinacy, but none to quarrel with the Physicians for taking other Measures to support their Charity themselves, when the Apothecaries had deserted 'em.

But tho' the Apothecaries rejected this Offer with scorn, yet they resented it so highly, that the Physicians shou'd undertake and accomplish what they had refus'd, that they have ever since treated the promoters of these *Dispensaries* as profess'd Enemies; so inconsistent is Charity with the Friendship of the Apothecaries.

The *Dispensary* was founded on a bottom too firm, and too meritorious to be shaken by any Direct Op-

position; and therefore twas resolv'd to weaken, and (as they at first made their Boasts) to break it, by withdrawing as many of the Physicians, as they cou'd from the support of it. This they attempted by promising their Assistance and Recommendation to such Physicians as should oppose or desert it, and in their Favour to supplant in Business, and Interest all those that adher'd firmly to it. To this end all their Engines were set to work to batter the Reputation of the *Dispensary Physicians*. They were in general represented as Men of no Business, Fortune, Learning, Skill, or Merit, and Characteriz'd in particular, as Superannuated Dotards, Trifflers, Madmen, Sots, Blockheads, Buffoons or Novices. To back these Characters 'twas their Business to forge scandalous Stories of the several *Dispensary Physicians*, which were brought to the Club at the Crown Tavern behind the Exchange, their common Receptacle of Slander, to be lick'd into Shape, and stamp'd, before they were to be handed about for current, and to be whisper'd tenderly as what they were concern'd to hear, or deliver'd carelessly by way of Chat, as common News. These things they hoped wou'd seldom come to the Ears of the Persons immediately affected by 'em, or if they did, that it wou'd be very difficult to trace 'em back to their Authors, and impossible for 'em to vindicate themselves every where, where they had been aspers'd.

On the other hand the Conditions of the Apothecaries favour were easy, Railing at the *Dispensary*, Justifying the Apothecaries, and Writing long Bills was all that was required. They could not expect great Fame and Business upon easier Terms, and therefore divers had not the Conscience to hold out. This made 'em a Party among the Physicians, who thought those Fools, that made a scruple of purchasing the Apothecaries favour at their Patients expense. Who those are any Body may easily guess, by observing with what different Affections the Apothecaries speak on the one hand of B—rre, G—ns, H—n, C—le, &c. on the other hand of M—n, Br—n, T—s, H—se, B—n, G—ll, P—s, G—n, &c. The comparative Merits of which Men wou'd make a very different Figure from that, which the Apothecaries give 'em, were it any part of the present design to make a particular enquiry into 'em.

But tho' the particular Physicians engag'd in the support of the *Dispensary* may by these base Arts of their Adversaries suffer something in their private Interests; the Publick is nevertheless benefited by it. For by the Apothecaries refusal, the Poor reap this Advantage, that at the *Dispensaries* even that moderate Profit, which must have been allow'd to an Apothecary is abated, the Subscribers aiming at no private Gain, and allowing no more Profit, than may serve to defray the necessary Expences, and keep the Stock entire.

But what is infinitely more valuable, and upon the score of which the Subscribers can't deny any of their Patients the liberty of sending their Bills to the *Dispensaries*, they are sure of having there the best Med'cines, and that their Bills shall be truly and faithfully made up; which in this general Corruption and Sophistication of the Shop Med'cines, and the insufferable liberty, now commonly taken by the Apothecaries, of substituting one thing for another, is a Consideration, that nearly concerns the Lives of the People.

This Article is of such consequence to those, whose plentiful

plentiful Circumstances make the exactions of the *Apothecaries* a light grievance, that, if they knew the common Practice of the *Shops*, in *Adulterating Med'cines*, and deviating from the *Prescriptions* which are sent to be made up by 'em, they wou'd not think themselves safe in the ordinary method of taking *Physick* from thence.

There are two things objected against the *Dispensaries*: One by the *Adversaries* of 'em, and such as are seduc'd by 'em; the other by the *People*, upon a wrong notion of Thrift, which shall be answer'd distinctly.

The first is, that under the pretence of treating the *People* kindly in the price of their *Med'cines*, the *Dispensaries* exact as much as the *Apothecaries*, and mean only to draw away that Profit from 'em, and get it themselves.

To answer this Objection with some certainty of Fact, I took the pains to examine scrupulously the Accounts of the *Dispensary* at the *College* for some Months backwards, and found, that for Six Hundred Pounds receiv'd above a Hundred Thousand Doses of *Physick* had been dispens'd from thence to the Sick of all Conditions in *Med'cines* of all the several forms and Denominations, as *Apozems*, *Julaps*, *Dragees*, *Linctus*'s, *Electuaries*, *Eloas*'s, *Powders*, *Drops*, &c. which one with another amounted to something under three Half Pence a Dose. These, with the additional Epithets of *Pectoral*, *Cordial*, *Hypnotic*, *Expectorating*, *Corroborating*, *Alexipharmac*, *Bekwartick*, &c. wou'd be charg'd at 12 d. per Dose, one with another, in the most modest *Apothecary's* Bill in Town, and wou'd that way amount to five Thousand Pound, and as most of 'em charge to twice as much. I shall leave the Objectors to compute how long fifty *Subscribers* may be in raising Estates out of these Profits; and the Readers to calculate the Difference between theirs and the *Apothecaries* Gains.

Besides, if this Objection were true, it might be good against the management of the *Dispensaries*, not against the *Dispensaries* themselves, which are thereby confess'd to be useful, when rightly manag'd. But it is scandalous in the Mouth of a Member of the *College of Physicians*, who is bound in Duty, as far as in him lies, to correct all such Abuses as he shall know in the exercise of his *Faculty*, and therefore ought by coming into the *Subscription* to contribute his Endeavour to rectify those Abuses, and to introduce a more honest and upright Management. But when a *Physician* rails at the *Dispensary*, We may be assur'd, that 'tis the Success, not the ill Conduct of it, that offends him, and that he is angry with it for discovering a Cheat, which he is engag'd to support; not for joining in it. For if the Objection be true, 'tis in his Power to correct it, and he's not honest if he does it not; if it be false he deserves a harder name for reporting it, for he at least ought to have held his Tongue, till he had been better inform'd, if he knew not otherwise before. But this Dilemma reaches such Objectors only as are, or may be Members of the *College of Physicians*, and may have a Share in the management of this design, when they please.

The other Objection is, that they who use the *Dispensary*, when ever they have a mind to take a little *Venice Treacle*, or a gentle Purge, or any other slight Dose, as is customary in light Indispositions, or by way of Precaution, must give a *Physician* a Fee, tho' they know as well as he what is proper for themselves, only because they can't have the *Physick* without a Bill under a Doctor's Hand, which they think to be a hardship.

But this is a Mistake. For no *Dispensary Physician* will refuse to give his Hand *Gratis* in such Cases to those, who use his Advice when it is necessary. And for those that use no *Physician* at any time in their Families, 'tis to be presum'd that their Quality is not such, as wou'd put 'em above coming to the *Dispensary*

at the times of sitting, where they may have proper Advice *Gratis*. As for those, that do not think fit to take either of these Courses, but run to the *Shops* for a Penny worth of *Venice Treacle*, or two Penny worth of *Jalap*, as they think fit, they must have recourse to the *Apothecaries* still. For the *Physicians* do not allow their *Servants* to countenance a Practice of so dangerous Consequence, and by selling of 'em to seem to authorize the taking of *Med'cines*, which they do not advise, and so become Instruments of the mischiefs that may ensue.

As for those, who with intention of Thrift take the middle Course, and are advis'd by the *Apothecaries* to save the Fees of a *Physician*, they are the most mistaken People alive. For they run into extravagance out of pure good Husbandry, and give the *Apothecaries* an opportunity to put 'em to thrice the charge by unnecessary *Med'cines*, that wou'd have procur'd 'em the attendance of a good *Physician*, and all necessary *Med'cine*. This will be self evident to those who will take the Pains to examine their *Apothecaries* Christmas Bills, and deducting Fifteen Shillings in the Pound (which is a very low computation of their advance above the *Dispensary* price) from the Sum total, they will find what they might have spar'd towards the Fees of a *Physician* when necessary, without the extraordinary expence of a Penny. Suppose the Bill to be twelve Pounds, there are then nine Pounds to be deducted, which is eighteen Fees for their *Physician*, if so many shou'd be necessary in a Year. But there are few Families of any Account or Substance in this Town, where their *Apothecaries* Bills run so low communibus annis as 12 l. and their *Physicians* Fees so high as nine. But allowing the *Apothecary* to deserve a consideration extraordinary for his care and attendance, those that employ him might with less charge and much more ease and safety reward him as a *Physician* with Fees, than suffer him to cram 'em with abundance of unnecessary *Physick* (which is often dangerous, always nauseous) only that he may after a less invidious manner consider himself more liberally in his Bill. Thus the middle People, who are most solicitous to avoid charge, pay more for the Advice of an *Apothecary*, than they might had a good *Physician's* for, to whom they are forc'd at last to fly in cases of Extremity, when perhaps 'tis too late.

These things may deserve the consideration of the *People*, and the Answer of the *Apothecaries*, if they are able to make a good and a true one; by which they will do themselves more Justice, and Honour, than by their present method of private and malicious Slander which has produc'd this publick Animadversion, and may others more particular and severe, that the World may be arm'd against their Scandal, and know upon what Account, and by whom it is propagated unless they shall desist from that dishonest Practice for the future.

A List of the Names of the Subscribers to the Dispensaries.

Sir Tho. Millington. Dr. Charlton, Dr. Collins, Dr. Burwell, Dr. Brown, Dr. Torless, Dr. Hulse, Dr. Morris, Dr. Fowke. Dr. Goodall, Dr. Alvey, Dr. Bateman, Dr. Gill, Dr. Harris, Dr. Mills, Dr. Dawes, Dr. Briggs, Dr. Cox, Dr. Gibson, Dr. Richd. Robinson, Dr. Pitt, Sir Edmund King, Sir Theod. Colladon, Dr. Lister, Dr. Harrel, Dr. Gray, Dr. le Fere, Dr. Hutton, Dr. Sloan, Dr. Hawys, Dr. Gaith, Dr. Nicholas, Dr. Gaylard, Dr. Wolaston, Dr. Rich. Morton, Dr. Wright, Dr. Drake, Dr. Woodward, Dr. Norris, Dr. Colbrook, Dr. Harvey, Dr. Branthwait, Dr. Ch. Morton, Dr. Hunt, Dr. Morelli, Dr. Horseman. Dr. Cockburn, Dr. Silvester, Dr. Short, Dr. Hamilton.

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